THE RAGTIMER

JULY/AUGUST 1973

PUBLISHED BY
THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

MUSIC FOR SALE

The following are new additions to the SOCIETY CATALOGUE. These are the selections issued to subscribers of the REPRINT CLUB - CHAPTER VII. They are now available at $1. 00 each postpaid (Minimum order $2. 00 please).

SR-160	The Red Devil Rag (Lucien Denni) 1910
SR-161	Candle-Stick Rag (Abe Olman) 1914
SR-162	Carnation Rag - Two Step (Clyde Douglass) 1903
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SR-166	Silence and Fun (Charles E. Mullen) 1904
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STILL AVAILABLE

(British Publications)

Details in MAY/JUNE 1973 Issue of THE RAGTIMER - See Page 2.

CF-808	Rhythm In Ragtime	$2. 00 (1 folio)
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(Minimum order $2. 00 - please)

RAGTIME...

UNDER YOUR HAT

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non - profit corporation having the following objects:

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

WE HOPE YOU ARE
PLANNING TO ATTEND!

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC.
9th ANNUAL BASH
1973

A warm welcome awaits you on
Saturday, October 13th
at the CARA INN
Toronto

This issue contains particulars.

This issue of THE RAGTIMER is accompanied by the registration information for the 9th Annual Bash of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. to be held on the weekend of October 13th, 1973 at the Cara Inn, located at the edge of the Toronto International Airport. Registrants for the Bash must make their own hotel accommodation arrangements. Our editorial is followed by more information about the Bash on the next page.

PLEASE help us in our preparations by mailing your "Bash" registration and cheque as soon as possible if you plan to attend. We always worry about the possibility of having to fix a limit on the number of registrations to be accepted. In the past we have solved the problem by moving to increasingly larger premises. It is our hope that the CARA INN will continue to be adequate.

Now is the time for the summer lull. We wish our members, who take summer vacations, an enjoyable holiday season. It is a time for travels aways from the home doorstep. It is a time when the search is on throughout the countryside for ragtime sheet music, ragtime piano rolls, old posters, music boxes, records and turn-of-the-century bygones. Happy Hunting! If your touring includes visits with our "Something Doing" professionals and other entertainers, don't forget to identify your connection with THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. That includes saying a "hello" from us as well.

From time to time we hear from Ragtime Bob Darch about his activities. John and Janice Cleary held another of their famous private "anniversary rent" parties on a ragtime Sunday evening at Omaha on May 20th.

Concluded on Page 4

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RAGTIME ... UNDER YOUR HAT Cont'd. from Page 3.

It was held in The Oar House in the old market. The Omaha World-Herald described it as a super show put together by Bob, and included Steve Spracklen, The St. Louis Ragtimers, two Toronto Jazz musicians, Jim Gallaway and Norm Amatio as well as other performers. They were running wild as The Oar House rocked to the rhythm of ragtime.

We are in receipt of a review copy of "Recorded Ragtime 1897-1958", a comprehensive discography by our member David A. Jasen. The book was published June 15th, 1973 by Archon Books (The Shoe String Press, Inc., 995 Sherman Avenue, Hamden, Conn., U. S. A. 06514) price $8. 50 in the U. S., 155 pages.

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MAKE YOUR PLANS EARLY TO ATTEND

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. 9th ANNUAL BASH - 1973

To be held on Saturday October 13th, at TORONTO, 3:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.

In the CARA INN located on the east side of the Toronto International Airport.

The entire lower floor complex of the hotel will be available for the Bash
Foyer - Connecting Corridor - Guildhall - Peel Room
3 Pianos - Continuous Bar

PLEASE NOTE: Dinner will be served at 6:00 p. m. SHARP
(Latecomers cannot be served)

Price $10. 00 per person (Bar service not included)
Free parking for cars

This year we will be issuing a meal ticket to be picked up with your registration. Be sure to keep it handy. It will be needed for surrender to hotel staff at the table when the meal is served.

Out-of-town Ragtimers should plan to make the CARA INN the place to stay. (The hotel has 211 guest rooms with color TV) - It then becomes the place you are most likely to meet your fellow Ragtimers.

Room rates per day are as follows: $19. 50 - Single
$25. 50 - Double or Twin

(See Hotel Registration Card)

We are delighted to announce that hotel arrangements have been made to equal or better those of last year. There will be two large halls and the opportunity for simultaneous activities.

Arrangements have been made to obtain the use of Peel Room "A" & "B" (complete with piano) on the Friday evening, October 12th, as a reception and warmup centre for members arriving in the city a day early and for the use of local members who wish to drop in and say Hello. The anticipated time will be 7:00 p. m. to closing.

On Sunday afternoon October 14th accommodation will be available from 1:00 p. m. until 6:00 p. m. for an afterglow fellowship period of our visiting members in particular.

Please mail your registration and remittance in advance (by October 1st). Keep in mind that registration acceptance may have to be limited to advance registrations.

Ragtimers who decide to stay at the CARA INN have until October 1st to arrange with the Hotel for firm registrations. Reservations sought after that date will be possible but less certain. Some of our local Ragtimers may also wish to become a CARA resident for that weekend. Be sure to mention The Ragtime Society when making your reservations.

The BASH is a "Ragtime Must". The registration form is attached to this issue of THE RAGTIMER.

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DR. JAMES HUBERT BLAKE

By Idamay MacInnes

The latest honour to be conferred on our dear friend Eubie is Doctor of Humane Letters, bestowed by Brooklyn College on June 5th, 1973. At the precise moment that the President placed the College colors around Eubie's neck - the band struck up "I'm just wild about Harry" - and the crowd of over 5,000 graduates gave him a standing ovation. What a glorious day for Eubie and a thrill for his wife Marion. Congratulations, Dr. Blake!

It is hard to keep up with Eubie's many concerts and T. V. shows. He recently appeared, July 4th, on the dedication programme for the "Louis Armstrong Bowl" (formerly the Singer Bowl) at the World's Fair site in New York. He appeared at Carnegie Hall on July 7th with the Newport Jazz Festival.

On July 19th, Eubie accompanied by his wife Marion, their friends Betty Jordon and Carl Seltzer, leave for Zurich. Eubie appears in concert in Baden on July 22nd - then another concert in Copenhagen on July 28th. On August 2nd he performs at the Jazz Festival in Molde, Norway, returning to New York August 5th.

We try to keep up with all the activities of this great 90-year old performer, but just doing that leaves us breathless! Eubie has now produced his 4th album, with the very able assistance of Carl Seltzer, under the Eubie Blake Music label.

Check your T. V. guide for September 18th and September 21st for Eubie's televised appearance with the Boston Pops Orchestra - Arthur Fiedler conducting.

SCOTT JOPLIN REDISCOVERED - PART 6

ATLANTA ARTS, the monthly magazine of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, in its January 1972 issue, published the details of the opera "TREEMONISHA" and the program notes prepared by Vera Brodsky Lawrence. The following is reprinted from that issue and covers the excellent

PROGRAM NOTES FOR TREEMONISHA

By Vera Brodsky Lawrence

"Although Scott Joplin enjoyed a preeminent reputation in the ragtime world after the epoch-making success of his Maple Leaf Rag (he was known as the "King of Ragtime") he could not succeed in finding a publisher for his second opera Treemonisha. This is not surprising. Not only was twentieth-century white America unreceptive to the concept of a serious grand opera by a black composer, but one by a black ragtime composer just put too great a strain on contemporary credibility. The situation was summed up in an article in the New York Age of March 5, 1908 (quoted in Jazz: A History of the New York Scene by Samuel B. Charters and Leonard Kunstadt):

COMPOSER OF RAGTIME NOW WRITING OPERA

> Since syncopated music, better known as ragtime, has been in vogue, many Negro writers have gained considerable fame as composers of that style of music. From the white man's standpoint of view he at present is inclined to believe that after writing ragtime the Negro does not figure.
>
> Music circles have been stirred recently by the announcement that Scott Joplin, known as the apostle of ragtime, is composing scores for grand opera.
>
> Last summer he came to New York from St. Louis and it was the opinion of all that his mission was one of placing several of his ragtime compositions on the market. The surprise of the musicians and the publishers can be imagined when Joplin announced that he was writing grand opera and expected to have his scores finished by summer.
>
> From ragtime to grand opera is certainly a big jump . . . yet we believe that the time is not far off when America will have several S. Coleridge Taylors who will prove that the black man can compose other than ragtime music.

Among those who had rejected Treemonisha was John Stark, the publisher of the historic Maple Leaf Rag in Sedalia, Missouri, in 1899. In spite of the legend of the warm lifelong personal relationship between Joplin and Stark, their professional dealings through the years seem in fact to have been punctuated by continuous strife and disputes arising mainly from Stark's unwillingness to publish Joplin's more ambitious works. His reasons for avoiding such costly and problematical ventures were no doubt dictated by sound business judgment. Earlier, in 1903, when after much controversy he had refused to bring out Joplin's first opera A Guest of Honor (a ragtime opera), Joplin copyrighted the work in his own name as an unpublished composition - perhaps he planned eventually to bring it out

himself. Although the opera was reported to have been performed at the time, all traces of its score have vanished and it must be presumed lost. The unsolved mystery of its disappearance and of what it contained has tantalized generations of Joplin admirers who continue to search for it to this day.

Among the twenty odd publishers besides Stark who had first brought out Joplin's works was Joplin himself. As early as 1901 he had issued his own piano rag The Easy Winners; more of his compositions would be published in the future under his imprint. When, in his search for a publisher for Treemonisha, he realized that he had reached a dead end, he quite understandably undertook to publish it himself. The wisdom of this decision is another matter, but wisdom is hardly the yardstick by which genius can be measured. This enormous undertaking marked the beginning of the series of disastrous frustrations and failures which culminated in Joplin's final breakdown. And yet, if he had not published Treemonisha it might have gone the way of A Guest of Honor.

We don't know exactly when Joplin began work on Treemonisha. The few available references are contradictory and convey more of the flavor of rumor than of substantiated fact. But this applies to a good deal of existing information (or lack of it) about certain periods of Joplin's life. One hopes that the growing awareness of his important place in American music will inspire further research and that the gaps will be filled.

* * *

We do know that Scott Joplin was born in Texarkana, Texas on November 24, 1868. His father Giles had been a slave and had played fiddle at his former master's dancing parties. His mother, born free, was also musical and the parents' talents seem to have been transmitted to their children: four sons, Monroe, Scott, Will, and Robert, and two daughters, Myrtle and Ossie, all of whom sang and played instruments. Growing up in this atmosphere, music was as natural to Scott as breathing, but he found his true direction when as a small child he had the opportunity to experiment on a neighbor's piano. On this instrument, and later, on one which his father had somehow managed to buy, he taught himself to improvise so extraordinarily that he was offered free lessons in piano and harmony by a German music teacher in the town. It is likely that these early lessons contributed the foundation for Joplin's lifelong commitment to education: a commitment which later furnished the motivating concept of his opera Treemonisha.

Faced with his father's ultimatum that he abandon music and carry his share of the family economic load, Joplin left home when he was about fourteen to become an itinerant pianist. The three years or so spent in his wanderings are among the periods about which we have no precise information. Just where he went is not known, but it may be assumed that he followed the typical pattern of the itinerant pianist of those days, playing in saloons and honky-tonks in the red light districts of towns and villages - in his case probably along the Mississippi valley. There can be no doubt that during this time Joplin soaked up vast quantities of native music of many kinds as well as the new, rapidly evolving ragtime (then called jig piano) which would ferment and develop in his creative subconscious, later to emerge in his own music. The extraordinarily true folk elements in Treemonisha most probably were seeded during this period of wandering.

In 1885 he came to St. Louis, then a larger-than-life, raw, successful trading town in the most flamboyant American tradition. Commerce was enormous, money plentiful, and "sporting life" activity went on at a furious pace day and night. Joplin became a member of this sporting world where black pianists were an indispensible part of the scene; indeed it was one of the few worlds, in that era in America, where a black musician might find comparatively gainful employment. In 1893 he joined the great musicians' migration to Chicago and the World's Columbian Exposition where rival ragtime practitioners competed in exploiting the new music.

In 1894 when the Fair was over Joplin settled in Sedalia, Missouri, a smaller but no less spirited version of St. Louis, where he would remain (with time out for vaudeville tours) until the turn of the century. To his resumed career in the honky-tonks, he added a number of more respectable musical activities: he played cornet with a local Negro organization The Queen City Concert Band (the first band reported to have played ragtime), he formed and participated in a singing group The Texans Medley Quartette (actually a male octet) that toured in vaudeville until 1896, and he began to compose and in 1895 to be published.

When the Quartette disbanded, Joplin returned to Sedalia and his honky-tonk employment. However, he now began the serious study of advanced harmony and composition. By 1897 he had composed his first two important piano rags: Original Rags and Maple Leaf Rag, neither of which would be published until 1899. John Stark's publication of Maple Leaf Rag (named after the place where Joplin played) literally exploded upon the American scene. Its unparalled success - it is reported to have sold more than a million copies - not only changed the direction of both Joplin's and Stark's lives, but of American popular music as well.

Royalties earned from Maple Leaf Rag liberated Joplin, a basically serious and quiet man, from his bondage to the red light scene, and in 1900 he married and moved to St. Louis where he devoted himself to study, teaching, and composing. He had already (about 1899) begun to show his inclination toward writing for the stage with The Ragtime Dance, an extended song with choreography (it was published by Stark in 1902). The ill-fated A Guest of Honor followed. Joplin formed an opera company that toured neighboring Missouri towns, probably performing both works.

During Joplin's years in St. Louis (until late 1905 when his marriage came to an unhappy termination) he composed many fine piano pieces, outstanding for their melodic beauty and careful craftsmanship. Although essentially a composer for the piano, Joplin seems always to have been preoccupied by the desire to write stage works. He may have begun Treemonisha while still in St. Louis. The information is conflicting. One reads, in an anonymous review of Treemonisha in the American Musician and Art Journal of June 24, 1911, appearing immediately after the opera was published, that Joplin had been working on the score for the preceding fifteen years. This seems hardly credible; it would place the start of composition in 1896 when Joplin, while touring with the Texas Medley Quartette was just beginning to have his first, rather naive piano pieces published. Another reference disagrees; Joplin's obituary in the New York Age (April 1917 and again quoted by Charters and Kunstadt) reports:

> About twelve years ago in St. Louis Joplin started to write the book and music to an opera which he finished when he came East ten years ago. One of his missions in New York was to interest someone in producing his ragtime opera.

If the Age's chronology is more reliable than its designation of Treemonisha as a "ragtime opera" it would place the commencement of composition at about 1905.

A certain amount of mystery surrounds Joplin's wanderings between his 1905 departure from St. Louis and his 1907 arrival in New York. It is known that he visited his friend and early collaborator Arthur Marshall in Chicago in early 1906 and that while there he had discussions with publishers. Were they discussing Treemonisha? During this reportedly restless period he is said to have gone back to St. Louis, to have visited Texarkana (probably for the first time since his 1882 departure), and perhaps even to have traveled to Europe. Wherever he may have wandered, we know that he arrived in New York in 1907, toured intermittently in vaudeville (billed as the "King of Ragtime"), composed, cut some piano rolls, and began his vain attempts to have Treemonisha published and produced.

Joplin married again in 1909 and his seven superb piano pieces published in that year - among the best he ever composed - would indicate that he finally had found a certain amount of fulfillment. It was not to last, however. His growing obsession with Treemonisha began to absorb his creativity. In his remaining years he was to bring out only three more piano works. As we know, the Treemonisha piano-vocal score was published in 1911. He made every effort to find a producer. That there was at least one nibble is indicated by yet another notice in the New York Age of August 7, 1913 (quoted by Charters and Kunstadt):

> Scott Joplin, the well known composer of ragtime, has interested Benjamin Nibur, manager of the Lafayette Theatre, in the production of his ragtime (!) opera, "Treemonisha." The opera will be produced at the Lafayette in the fall.

This was followed a week later by an advertisement in the Age:

> Singers wanted at once - call or write to Scott Joplin, 252 West 47th Street, New York City. State voice you sing.

The production was never realized. Nor was any other. Joplin never relaxed his efforts, and little by little his entire existence was devoured by his obsession to see Treemonisha on the stage. He gave up playing in public, dismissed (or lost) his students, and plunged feverishly into the task of orchestrating his opera, helped by his friend Sam Patterson, who copied the parts from the full score as each page was finished. All traces of this orchestration have vanished; indeed it is not known whether it was ever completed.

In 1915 Joplin staked everything on a last desperate effort and presented an informal, unstaged performance of the Treemonisha score at a small hall in Harlem for an invited audience that included some potential backers. Lacking the accouterments of a stage production, and with Joplin at the piano substituting for the orchestra, the effort, although painstakingly rehearsed, was a dismal failure. Joplin was crushed by his audience's indifference and lack of comprehension. His mental deterioration progressed rapidly from

then on. In the autumn of 1916 it became necessary to have him committed to the Manhattan State Hospital where he died on April 1, 1917.

* * *

The premiere of Treemonisha, sixty-one years after it was published, is significant for a variety of reasons. Not only is it a unique work by a great black American composer, but its sociological, cultural, and philosophical implications have a particularly potent meaning for us today. In spite of its ingenuous plot - Treemonisha tells a simple tale rather naively in the form of a folk fable - it conveys a powerful and prophetic social message, an astonishing concept for an early twentieth-century American opera: that through education (abolition of ignorance and superstition) would Negroes find their own road to true freedom. While this may seem simplistic in the light of today's social pressures, it nevertheless furnishes a valid basis for the beginnings of black liberation in its broader connotations.

Another prophetic concept is expressed by Joplin, many years before women's liberation, when the village people, realizing that they need leadership and guidance, ask Treemonisha - because she has an education - to be their leader. In a remarkable passage, the people sing choral affirmative responses to her reiterated question: would they be willing to follow the leadership of a woman (and an eighteen-year-old at that). Upon being fervently assured that they would, she accepts.

Reference to Treemonisha as a ragtime opera are by no means correct. True, it contains some raggy passages, but it is obvious that Joplin was attempting to compose a "grand opera" according to the accepted standards of the day. There are all the appurtenances of proper grand opera here: an overture to act one, instrumental preludes to acts two and three, solo arias, duets, ensembles, recitatives, many choral passages, much demand for choreography, and all the words are sung. The work is made up of twenty-seven set pieces without transitional development. The music is mostly melodious in the style of the period.

But when Joplin sets aside his operatic party-manners - when he remembers his powerful racial heritage and illuminates the music of his own people, as he had heard it in Texarkana and during his youthful wanderings - then occur the moments in Treemonisha that reveal a dimension of musical truth which signals the presence of genius."

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Ragtimers now know that classic ragtime is different from a song. Here in Ontario you can't be sure when a song is a song. We now have a newly formed organization called SONG which stands for the abbreviated name of the Society of Ontario Nut Growers.

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RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Chiaroscuro 106 'Don Ewell: A Jazz Portrait Of The Artist'

Selections: Medley (Buddy's Habit, Carolina Shout, Little Rock Getaway); Careless Love; Lullaby In Rhythm; Delmar Drag; Sunday; I'm Gonna Stomp Mr. Henry Lee; Spain; Snowy Morning Blues; Nobody's Sweetheart; Migrant Worker Blues; Someday Sweetheart.

Fat Cat's Jazz FCJ 109 'Don Ewell: Jazz On A Sunday Afternoon'

Selections: Honey Hush; Medley (Save It Pretty Mama, I Want A Little Girl, Cherry); Oh! Baby; Davenport Blues; 'Deed I Do; Honey Babe; Medley (Caution Blues, My Monday Date, Rosetta); CCNY Rioter Blues; Medley (Sweet Georgia Brown, Rose Of The Rio Grande); Love Will Last.

Fat Cat's Jazz FCJ 110 'Don Ewell & Bob Greene: Duet!'

Selections: I Got Rhythm; Singing The Blues; My Memphis Baby; The Pearls; Mr. Jess; Buddy Boden's Blues; Blue Skies; Dr. Jazz Stomp; Reconciliation Blues.

77 SEU 12/42 'Don Ewell Live At The 100 Club'

Selections: If Dreams Come True; Basin Street Blues; Corrine Corrina; Delmar Drag; Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now; Handful Of Keys; It Must Be True; Aunt Hagar's Blues; 'Frisco Rider; If I Had You.

Tempus is always fugiting away, it seems, and while it does, several of the artists previously touched on in this column have been back to the studios. It seems hard to believe that it has been since the March-April 1969 issue of The Ragtimer, for example, that I last expressed my admiration for the consummate artistry of Don Ewell.

Ewell has not been idle during that time, as the above listing demonstrates. That listing also amply demonstrates the astonishing breadth of this extraordinary musician. Jelly Roll, James P., Fats, Hines, Bix, Oliver and many other great names of traditional jazz vie with Ewell originals in the above titles, all of which are selected and performed with taste and with an eye toward avoiding overworking any given piece of material.

Three of the four are solo outings. The two studio solo sessions are absolutely superb offerings of traditional-jazz-New York-style ragtime piano. Don't ask me to choose between them.

The 77 LP, as the title indicates, is an in-person recording, and the crowd noise is far less intrusive than usual in such circumstances. Ewell, however, is not at the top

of his form on this date. Of course, Ewell on an off day is still better than most anyone else around, and there are few ragtime pianists who would not be happy to claim this LP. Still, it runs third to the other two.

The fourth LP is an unhappy effort to team Ewell with another first-class traditional pianist, Bob Greene, who plays pretty strictly in the Jelly Roll style. Ewell's New York stride did not match well with Greene's approach, and the session was apparently marred by clashes of temperament, repertoire, and who knows what else.

The results fell short of the musical requirements for a full LP, and producer Johnson 'Fat Cat' McRee had to supplement the duets with Ewell's solo performance, a fine one, on 'Blue Skies', as well as two vocal tracks, 'My Memphis Baby' and 'Buddy Bolden's Blues', on which McRee is accompanied separately by Ewell and Greene, respectively.

Those three tracks are the most enjoyable ones here. The duets, hampered by a drummer who is somewhat too close to the microphone, are poorly balanced, badly edited and, despite occasional flashes of really stomping piano, lacking in inspiration. 'Nuff said on this one.

We should not leave Ewell without mentioning two other LPs, GHB 68 'Lewis-Ewell Big 4' and Center CLP-3 'Don Ewell Trio and Quartet'. Both are small-group jazz, rather than ragtime, but with only three other musicians present (George Lewis, clarinet; Jim Robinson, trombone; Cie Frazier, drums), Ewell gets plenty of room to stretch out on each record.

That 1969 article on Ewell was followed by one covering the last of the Harlem 'rent party' pianists, Willie 'The Lion' Smith. Smith can still play top-drawer piano, and his full, rich sound is one of the most romantic and lyrical in all of traditional jazz.

Unlike Ewell, however, Smith seems to content himself with reworking essentially the same material when in front of a microphone. Moreover, his LPs seem to contain an increasing amount of conversation, much of which is Mortonesque braggadocio.

Of course, Smith has spent a highly productive lifetime perfecting these routines, and he is still a master at performing them. However, even though Smith's playing on any given date may remain impeccable, I still find that the repetition, while understandable, takes much of the urgency out of the prospect of purchasing a new Smith LP. For the record, though, his more recent efforts include the following:

Halcyon 104 'Live At Blues Alley'
Saba (a German label) SB 15101 'Music On My Mind'
Flying Dutchman FD 10140 'California, Here I Come'

The first two LPs are in-person, piano-solo-cum-commentary LPs. (The Halcyon has been reissued, I believe, as Chiaroscuro 104.) Between them, they contain almost no duplicated material and for that reason, could both be worth having, especially if you don't have much in the way of other Smith recordings.

The Flying Dutchman offers Smith in one solo and three duets with a young disciple of his, Mike Lipskin. The rest of the LP is given over to Lipskin, whose efforts are crippled by the unsympathetic accompaniment given him by drummer Elvin Jones and electric bassist Chuck Rainey. This one's only for die-hard Smith fans.

William Bolcom (The Ragtimer, March-April 1972), Dave Jasen (First Issue 1968) and Joshua Rifkin (July-August 1971) have also been back to the studio, as indicated below:

Jazzology JCE-72 'Bolcom Plays His Own Rags'

Selections: Glad Rag; Epitaph For Louis Chauvin; Tabby Cat Walk; Gardenia-A Flower Rag; Incineratorag; Last Rag; Garden Of Eden Rag Suite (Old Adam, The Eternal Feminine, The Serpent's Kiss-Rag Fantasy, Through Eden's Gates); Lost Lady; California Porcupine-Grand Rag Fantasy.

Blue Goose 3001 'Dave Jasen: Fingerbustin' Ragtime'

Selections: Raymond's Rag; London Rag; Dave's Rag; Festival-A Ragtime Cakewalk; That American Ragtime Dance; Qwindo's Rag; Make Believe Rag; Susan's Rag; Charleston Rag; Elite Syncopations; Peacherine Rag; Kitten On The Keys; Maple Leaf Rag; Poison Ivy Rag; Brittwood Rag; Everybody's Rag.

Nonesuch H-71264 'Joshua Rifkin: Piano Rags By Scott Joplin, Volume II'

Selections: Elite Syncopations; Eugenia; Leola-Two-Step; Rose Leaf Rag-A Rag Time Two-Step; Bethena-A Concert Waltz; Paragon Rag; Solace-A Mexican Serenade; Pine Apple Rag.

The title of William Bolcom's new LP tells the story -- eight Bolcom rags, plus a suite made up of four distinct numbers. They contain, for the most part, strong melodies, just the right amount of musical ideas that have come along since the ragtime years, and sufficient variety to comprise an interesting program. Most of the tunes are fine rags, with only a few numbers wide of the bull's eye; moreover, few ragtime composers of any era could put together a collection as free of repetition as this one. As played in Bolcom's restrained, lightly rhythmic style, these tunes make up an impressive LP.

Dave Jasen likes his ragtime fast and hot. His eight compositions that make up Side One of his LP reflect this fact and if they collectively exhibit less variety than the Bolcom rags, they are individually good tunes with plenty of spirit and drive. The overall program is put into proper balance by Dave's highly personal, stomping interpretations of eight rags from the classic period on Side Two. Dave plays straight-ahead ragtime of the type that attracted most of us to the music in the first place, and that's always welcome in these quarters.

Joshua Rifkin's second LP of Joplin tunes is a worthy follow-up to the first, with his skilled reading of Joplin's scores bringing out the subtleties and surprises implicit therein. Moderate tempos, confident and accurate technique, and a 'legitimate' approach to the tunes add up to a satisfying LP in a vein that's rarely attempted for ragtime and even more rarely done well.

I find each of these three LPs successful in what it attempts. In fact, I rather think that those ragtimers whose tastes lean only toward one end of the ragtime spectrum are missing out on much of the enjoyment that the music contains.

One final note for those of you who've enjoyed the recordings of Jelly Roll Morton tunes by Butch Thompson (see, e. g. , The Ragtimer, Third Issue, 1967). Jazzette 1002 'Mr. Jelly Rolls On' is an LP of vocals on Morton songs by Chet Ely, a singer who is, I suppose, adequate, but nothing really special, accompanied beautifully by Thompson's blues-tinged piano. Available from Jazzette at 796 Reddoch St. , Memphis, Tennessee 38117.

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NATIONAL RAGTIME FESTIVAL RIDES THE HIGH TIDE AT ST. LOUIS

By Betty Redelsheimer

(Ed. Comment: We spent a Sunday recently with Betty here at Toronto while on her way from St. Louis to the family island off Parry Sound. During the course of activities we persuaded Betty to put aside her washboard and double-register Kazoo long enough to jot down a report of the St. Louis Festival. So here we have, though written in haste, an excellent review.)

Despite high water, excessive heat, and thunderstorm warnings, capacity crowds flocked aboard the Goldenrod Showboat in St. Louis on the nights of June 13, 14, 15 and 16 for the 9th Annual National Ragtime Festival. Recent flooding had created a paucity of parking spaces, making it necessary on at least one night for the St. Louis Police to provide shuttle service, from the river front to the downtown area, in the paddy wagon. Visitors, wanting to have their pictures taken getting in or out of the vehicle, had a tendency to slow down this good-natured service. Musicians, hoping to continue the now traditional after-hours sessions on the levee, had difficulty finding a spot out of water or not covered with Mississippi mud.

The Goldenrod is now two boats, with the old Becky Thatcher, a vintage stern-wheeler, moored alongside. This provided more playing room for more bands, if not more elbow room for those in the audience. A variation of Parkinson's Law must apply here, since there were some who stood all night to hear their favorite performers.

Headlining the show in the theatre each night was the New Black Eagle Jazz Band from Boston with Terry Waldo filling in for their absent piano player. The Black Eagles, incidently, feature a unique rhythm section. I, for one, had never heard or seen a real, live tuba player play 4 beats to the bar. Taking turns with them, were the Salty Dogs from Chicago, always a delight to hear.

The Captain's Barroom on the second deck of the showboat featured our old friends, the Boll Weevils Jass Band, while the St. Louis Ragtimers held forth in their regular spot, the Boiler Room on the old Becky Thatcher.

In town for another event, the All Navy Dixieland Band from New Orleans appeared in a free concert one afternoon on the outside deck. Individual members of the group took the opportunity to sit in at night with various bands. Entertaining on the Mississippi Belle, a small excursion boat known in years past for its after-hours "booze cruise", were the Tiger Rag Forever Jazz Band from St. Louis.

Solo pianists included Knocky Parker, a perennial favorite from Florida, Gil Lieby, John Gazzoli, and Charley Booty who was joined for duets by Society member Ben Conroy from Austin, Texas. A talent new to me was that of Jay Douglas, a professor from Southern Illinois University, who plays Scott Joplin in the classical sense.

We missed many old friends who were unable to attend, but were happy to greet Society members Dave and Ruth Flowitt and Anne Arpin from Toronto, Gerry Vondy from Denver, and Jack and Eleanor Phelan from Boston.

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WILLIE (THE LION) SMITH

1897-1973

The last of the great originators of the Harlem eastern ragtime school of stride piano died on Wednesday night, April 18, 1973. William Henry Joseph Bonaporte Bertholoff Smith was born at Goshen, New York on November 23, 1897 and, as he frequently stated, "under Sagittarius, the ninth sign of the Zodiac." He was the last of a now famous trio who, in the heyday of the striding style, played three piano arrangements at parties of New York's elite society. The others, of course, were James P. Johnson and Thomas (Fats) Waller.

The Lion left behind a vast legacy of musical compositions and recordings. The Lion was a teacher of music, giving formal lessons in composition, theory and harmony. His effectiveness as a teacher is apparent in the naming of pupils like Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Mel Powell and Joe Bushkin. In the days of his long tenure as resident pianist at Pod's & Jerry's speakeasy in Harlem, white composers George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Roy Bargy, and Hoagy Carmichael came to listen to his talent and ideas.

Willie was highly respected by his fellow musicians. He was someone very special. Much of his greatness was missed by a public who thought of him as an entertainer and raconteur, a pianist in a red vest with a cigar clenched between his teeth and wearing a black bowler perched at a jaunty angle on his head. But the Lion was a deeper and much more complex person in his own right. But when the Lion roared, you paid attention.

This man grew up playing ragtime, and ragtime never departed from his repertoire throughout his lifetime. The ragtime cult has lost one of its own father figures. He will be missed but never forgotten.

John Norris, Editor of Canada's Jazz Magazine, CODA for the May/June issue wrote succinctly in his editorial as follows:

"The life-force generated by Willie (The Lion) Smith kept him ahead of many people half his age. He was always the focal point of any gathering and his sharp wit, boundless energy and awareness of everything required his listeners (they were always listeners with the Lion) to be alert at all times.

His music was often hidden beneath his public veneer but there is no doubt that he was one of the most important innovators during the period when Harlem was producing such exceptional piano music. It isn't generally known that he suffered from arthritis for many years - he never complained about this but it seriously hampered his execution.

He was a frequent visitor to Toronto and when you caught himon a good night the music flowed with grace, distinction and wit. It was in Toronto, too, that the best of his latter day recordings were made - an album of duets with Don Ewell entitled "Grand Piano".

When The Lion laid down his cane for the last time in April an Epoch had come to an end."

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Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

I met and heard, Don Ewell when he was in England. He's a fine piano player, as I've known for years from his records, and a perfect gentleman. His Morton solos were indescribably beautiful and the rest of his playing was superb. Unfortunately, Ragtime isn't very popular in England yet, but I'm working on it.

Ray Smith,
Watford, England.

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Member Harvey N. Roehl has written to advise that his book "Player Piano Treasury" has been published as a new second edition which Harvey has enlarged considerably over the first edition by the addition of much material which is new. For more particulars write to:

The Vestal Press
P. O. Box 97, Vestal, N. Y.,
U. S. A. 13850

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I would like to take this opportunity to give some credit to one of your members, Tex Wyndham, of Wilmington, Delaware. When I called Tex from Washington to ask him to grant me an interview (I work for the Voice of America), he cordially invited me to come to Wilmington and spend the night at his home. He gave me a fascinating, enthralling interview on the history and theory of ragtime piano. As my own interest in this form of music deepened, he encouraged me to join the Ragtime Society. The resurgence of this exciting American art form is due in no little measure to spokesmen (and performers) like Tex Wyndham.

Richard A. Baker,
Arlington, Virginia, U.S.A.

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The ragtime revival has hit the local record stores full tilt in the last year. One local entrepreneur told me last week that Gunther Schuller's recent recording from the Red Back Book of Rags is particularly hard to keep in stock. The music school here remains a bit more conservative, though it is possible to hear "Maple Leaf" or "Pork and Beans" occasionally coming from a practice room, and a Scott Joplin set was included on at least one recital last year. My own late-night practice sessions (on ragtime of course) have more than once attracted the attention of a music student who wanted to know what I was playing and where I got it. And my ragtime is a real favorite with the janitorial staff.

One piece of news that should be passed on to the members of the SOCIETY is the imminent publication of a new book on ragtime by Professor William Schafer of Berea College. Judging by my reading of some of the chapters prior to publication it will probably be one of the most significant contributions made to the literature on ragtime in years. It should be reviewed in the pages of THE RAGTIMER. If you like, I'd be glad to take on the reviewing job myself.

Bill Long,
Bloomington, Indiana, U.S.A.

(Ed. Comment: We hope you will contribute a review of the book as proposed.)

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Ragtimers will be interested in knowing that Robert A. Fremont's new folio "Favorite Songs of the Nineties" (Dover Publications) includes a brief introduction by Max Morath. The book contains reproductions of the original editions, usually with the covers, of eighty-nine songs from the period ..... mostly non-ragtime numbers, such as After the Ball, My Gal Sal, etc.

Tex Wyndham,
Mendenhall, Pa., U.S.A.

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I am sending you all material relating to the Scott Joplin concert in Texarkana on April 8, 1973.

B. J. Conroy Jr.,
Austin, Texas, U.S.A.

(Ed. Comment: Thanks to Ben for the particulars of the centennial concert sponsored by Texarkana Community School, Arkansas. Joplin was born in Texarkana five years before it officially became a city. A report of the concert will appear later in our "SCOTT JOPLIN REDISCOVERED" series.)

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I am forwarding the enclosed programme for your records.

The concert was well played, and was received with a mixture of surprise, delight, and enthusiasm. The surprise resulted from the fact that the audience were primarily jazz fans, and apparently many of them were getting their first taste of the pure ragtime style. However the most enthusiastic ovation went to the Jelly Roll Morton piece, which is jazz, not ragtime.

William Hyder,
Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

(Ed. Comment: This was the Smithsonian Institution Performing Arts, Jazz Heritage Concert of Feb. 11, called An Evening of Orchestrated Ragtime. Works by Scott Joplin were featured. The "Red Back Book of Rags" was used. Gunther Schuller directed The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble. The New Angel S-36060 (Capitol) titled "The Red Back Book - Scott Joplin (Schuller)" is now available at record stores and relates to this concert.)

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I have been a member of the Ragtime Society since I was in medical school and still look forward to each issue of The Ragtimer. It is my intention to do some research for THE RAGTIMER on the banjos (5-string, mandolin, and tenor) and their place in ragtime. I would like to get in touch with other members having knowledge and information about this subject.

Dr. Richard D. Knapp,
80 Academy Road,
Bala-Cynwyd, Pa., 19004, U.S.A.

(Ed. Comment: This is an opportunity for members who are banjo enthusiasts to help Dr. Knapp on a promising project.)

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We heard of the SOCIETY through a recent radio program by Jean Christophe Averty (called in France the archeologist of Jazz) which included Claude Bolling, pianist.

The address of the SOCIETY is also given on one of the record series dedicated to ragtime, jazz blues, and boogie-woogie by the same Claude Bolling.

However, to be a ragtime enthusiast is not easy in our country. We want to become members of the Ragtime Society.

Alain Maugerie,
Dominique Paillard,
Tours, France.

(Ed. Comment: Welcome to an ever-increasing group of ragtimers.)

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Society member James J. Fuld writes:

"If any member of The Ragtime Society will sell any original Scott Joplin sheet music, I would like to purchase same."

Room 2100,
300 Park Avenue,
New York, N. Y., U. S. A. 10022.

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RAGTIME IN 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD POSITION ON BILLBOARD

SPECIAL SURVEY OF BEST SELLING CLASSICAL LP'S

John Fisher has drawn our attention to the 5/26/73 survey by BILLBOARD which places ragtime at the top of best selling classical LP's.

1. The Red Back Book - Scott Joplin, The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble conducted by Gunther Schuller, Angel S-36060 (Capitol)
2. Scott Joplin: Piano Rags, Vol. 1, Nonesuch 71248 (Elektra)
3. Scott Joplin: Piano Rags, Vol. 2, Joshua Rifkin Nonesuch 71264 (Elektra)
4. Mahler: 8th Symphony, Chicago Symphony Orch. (Solti) London OSA 1295

SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN - in the Odyssey Lounge at the top of the Hyatt Regency, Toronto, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.

EUBIE BLAKE - at the Molde Jazz Festival, Norway, August 2.

RAGTIME BOB DARCH - at CLUB 76, St. Clair Avenue W., Toronto, Sept. 4 to Oct. 27.
- at Quality Motel, Carlisle, Pa., Nov. 12 to Dec. 8.

BOB DURST - "RAJAH OF RAGTIME" at Rainbow Hotel, Great Falls, Montana, July 23 to Aug. 18. At Ramada Inn, Casper, Wyoming, Aug. 27 to Sept. 22.

DON EWELL - at the Life Lounge, 3233 N. Ocean Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with Andy Bartha and the Deep South Dixieland Jazz Band.
- at Ocean Manor every Saturday from 3:00 p. m. to 5:00.
- at Beowulf Restaurant, 4000 N. Federal Hwy., Lighthouse point, every Sunday from 7:00 p. m. to 11:00.

DAVE FLOWITT - at the Brunswick Hotel, 481 Bloor St. W., with the Climax Jazz Band, Wed. 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m. at Grossman's Tavern, 379 Spadina Ave., with Dr. MacJazz band, Thurs. 8:30 p. m. to 12:30 a. m.

JIM KAPLAN - at the Pizza-Stein, 1428 W. Galena Ave., Freeport, Illinois on Tues., Fri. and Sundays.

JOHN MADDOX - at Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, Col., Sept. 3 to Sept. 22.

MIKE MONTGOMERY - at The Dakota Inn, Rathskeller, Detroit, Mich. Friday nights.

MAX MORATH - on the road with his show "At The Turn Of The Century".

DR. ELI NEWBERBER - and The New Black Eagle Jazz Band at the Stickey Wicket Pub, West Main Street, Hopkinton, Mass. Weds. 7:30 p. m. to 11:30 p. m.

TOM NOEL - on the road with his living portrayal show "Mark Twain At Home".

CHARLIE RASCH - & "Sister Kate", at the Black Sheep Tavern, Manchester, Michigan, Friday nights, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.

BOB SEELEY - at Charlie's Crab Restaurant & Lounge, 3230 Pine Lake Rd. . Orchard Lake, Michigan, Mon. thru Sat.

STEVE SPRACKLEN - at CLUB 76, 76 St. Clair Avenue W., Toronto, Oct. 29 to Dec. 8.

DAN SUMMERS - and the New Charleston Chasers (with the ODJB sound), Whirlpool St. at Cleveland Avenue, Niagara Falls, N. Y., Fri. & Sat. nights.

TREBOR TICHENOR - and the Saint Louis Ragtimers, on The Goldenrod Showboat, at St. Louis, Missouri.

TERRY WALDO - at Deibel's Restaurant, German Village, Columbus, Ohio, Wed. & Thurs. nights.

TEX WYNDHAM - and The Red Lion Jazz Band, appearing regularly, at The Surry Restaurant, 1100 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Del.

PERFORMERS: Please keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

PEARL of the ORIENTAL RAG TWO STEP

50

By HARRY P. GUY Composer of ECHOES FROM THE SNOWBALL CLUB RAGTIME WALTZ, Published By WILLARD BRYANT

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